

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:350
ANSWERED ON:21.03.2001
NON-IODISED SALT
NARESH KUMAR PUGLIA;SHYAMA SINGH

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the decision of the Union Government to allow the sale of non-iodised salt has created alarm in the medical community;
- (b) if so, whether the lack of iodine in human body is causing health problems particularly mental retardation;
- (c) if so, whether any indepth study has been conducted in this regard; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof?

Answer

MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. C.P. THAKUR)

(a)to(d): A statement is laid on the table of the Lok Sabha.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 350 FOR 21.3.2001

With effect from 30th September, 2000, the PFA Rules, 1955 have been amended so as to lift the statutory requirement of the Central Government for compulsory sale of iodised salt for direct human consumption in all parts of the country. After examining various representations received from different sources, the Central Government came to the conclusion that this power would more effectively be exercised by the State Governments within their jurisdiction on the basis of the nutritional profile in different parts of their States. The step taken by the Central Government will now ensure that a more informed decision will be taken by the State Governments on the question of statutory compulsion on sale of only iodized salt for direct human consumption. The resulting situation would ensure that, in areas where the statutory compulsion is not considered necessary by the State Governments, there would be an adequate flexibility to permit the exercise of an informed choice on intake of either iodised or non-iodised salt. This would ensure that in areas not having iodine deficiency, there would be no unnecessary compulsion in matters relating to public health. Even after the lifting of the Central statutory provision requiring compulsory sale of iodized salt for direct human consumption, all but three States - Kerala, parts of Maharashtra and parts of Andhra Pradesh - are enforcing a statutory restriction under section 7

(iv) of the PFA Act, 1954. The Kerala Government, as a matter of specific policy, does not believe in compulsion in achieving public health outcomes. The other two States - Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh - have excluded the coastal districts where it is felt that iodine deficiency is not a threat. This position clearly indicates that, even after the withdrawal of the Central Government notification, the statutory requirement for compulsory sale of iodized salt continues in those parts of the country where the State Governments have recognized the need.

Over the last four decades, from time to time, studies regarding the incidence of iodine deficiency have been carried out by the Directorate General of Health Services/ICMR. 282 districts have been covered in 25 States and 5 Union Territories. The surveys have shown that in about 85 percent of the districts, iodine deficiency disorders were observed in more than 10 percent of the population, at the time of these surveys.

The Central Government has also taken on a special drive of information, education and communication (IEC) in respect of harmful effects on account of insufficient intake of iodine. With the continuing statutory compulsion on sale of iodized salt in all parts of country where it is required, through the requisite notifications enforced by the State Governments, and supplemented by the more intensive IEC campaign, there is no increased risk on account of iodine deficiency. The apprehensions expressed through the media by medical professionals, are not well-founded.